

The title 'WEST NILE VIRUS' is written in a large, bold, black serif font. Behind the text are three detailed line drawings of mosquitoes, one on the left, one in the middle, and one on the right, all facing towards the center.

WEST NILE VIRUS

- ❖ West Nile Virus was first found in the United States in September 1999, in New York City. It is normally found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. It is closely related to St. Louis encephalitis virus, a disease that is naturally found in the United States.
- ❖ West Nile Virus is caught through the bite of a mosquito that has the virus. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on birds that have the virus. The mosquitoes then give the virus to humans and animals when they bite them.
- ❖ **Culex pipiens**, in the North, and **Culex quinquefasciatus**, in the South, are the main mosquito species that carry West Nile Virus. These mosquitoes breed in stagnant water in rain barrels, tubs, catch basins, cesspools, ditches, ground pools, and other places where water stands for more than a week. The adults will enter homes and bite at night. These mosquitoes are higher in numbers in late summer. Because of their breeding habitats, the **best** way to control these mosquitoes is to get rid of stagnant water.
 - Empty containers that hold water for any period of time.
 - Keep ditches free of trash so that water will continue to flow.
 - Keep septic tanks in good repair.
 - Clean out leaves and other trash from gutters regularly.
- ❖ Studies done in New York after the 1999 epidemic showed that about three-fourths of the people with West Nile Virus did not become sick at all. About one-third had a mild illness with fever, headache, and body aches, sometimes also with swollen lymph glands and a skin rash. Only a few (1%) had the dangerous infection called encephalitis which causes headache, high fever, neck stiffness, confusion, coma, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, and, in some cases, death. The time between the mosquito's bite and a person becoming sick is usually 5 to 15 days. Anyone can get West Nile Virus if the virus is in the mosquitoes in the area, but persons over 50 years of age are most likely to get encephalitis. There is no vaccine to prevent the disease and there are no drugs to treat the disease.

- ❖ West Nile virus is **NOT** passed from person to person. In other words, you cannot get sick from touching or kissing a person who has West Nile Virus, or from a health care worker who has treated someone with the disease. No one has caught the virus from handling live or dead birds with the virus. However, avoid picking up any dead animal with your bare hands. Use gloves or double plastic bags to get rid of the dead animal.

To reduce the risk of becoming infected with West Nile Virus:

- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening. Make sure the screens on windows and doors are in good repair.
- If you must be outdoors during these times, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to prevent being bitten by the mosquitoes.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. A good repellent will contain 20% to 30% DEET®. DEET® that is stronger than 30% **may** cause side effects, mainly in children. Repellents may hurt the eyes and mouth, so do not put repellent on the hands of children. No insect repellents should be used on children under 3 years of age.
- Spray clothing with repellents containing Permethrin® or DEET®, because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing.

WHEN YOU USE AN INSECTICIDE OR INSECT REPELLENT, BE SURE TO READ AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO USE, AS WRITTEN ON THE LABEL.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control is helping to find out if West Nile Virus has spread beyond the New York City area. The study will include catching mosquitoes and testing them for West Nile Virus, and looking into unusual wild bird deaths.

If you have additional questions concerning West Nile Virus, contact your local mosquito control program, your county health department, or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dybid/westnile/q&a.htm.

